

CAPITAL LETTER:

Blast Due in Otepka Case

By RUTH MONTGOMERY

WASHINGTON: The long-smoldering case of Otto Otepka, who was summarily removed by the Kennedy Administration as deputy chief of the State Department's security office, is nearing a congressional climax. The Senate Internal Security Subcommittee's report is expected to blast Otepka's superiors.

An unimpeachable source said the final witness scheduled is Deputy Undersecretary of State William Crackoett. Shortly thereafter, the committee will release a report which could provide Republicans with campaign fodder during an election year.

"President Johnson will not be pleased with the report," one Democratic source said. "It will strike forcefully at certain officials who are still highly placed in the department. It will then be up to Secretary Dean Rusk."

A committee member said executive hearings have produced evidence of "some flagrant leaks of executive testimony."

He predicted Rusk will be forced to call a department hearing on the Otepka case, after release of the Senate report.

The case erupted in the headlines a year ago this month, when the State Department served notice on Otepka that he was being fired as chief of the security office's evaluation division for actions "unbecoming to an officer" of the department. He was accused of passing confidential information to unauthorized persons—to the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee dur-

ing its investigation into the department's security procedures.

His Congressional defenders counter-charged that the real reason was Otepka's conscientious effort to do his job too well.

Otepka's job was first downgraded in 1962, after he protested that Secretary Rusk had granted 152 security "waivers" to high-ranking State Department personnel pending a more complete background investigation.

Otepka reportedly discovered that although derogatory information, including possible Communist affiliation, had been turned up about some of these persons in agency checks, they nevertheless were being allowed to handle classified material.

Otepka, a professional security officer, went to the State Department in 1953 as a personnel security evaluator. Two major personnel security cases on which he personally worked were those of John Stewart Service, who had been separated from the State Department in 1950 for turning over documents to Philip Jaffe, publisher of Amerasia, but was ordered reinstated by the Supreme Court six years later; and William Wieland, who had a hand in shaping U. S. policy towards Cuba before and after Fidel Castro's take-over.

Otepka's personal difficulties apparently began after he objected to security clearances given to Wieland and Service.

Republicans will have a month to capitalize on the Otepka case, if they decide to make a campaign issue of State Department security.

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